

April 2016 Federal Partners in Transition – National Service Fact Sheet

The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) is an independent federal agency with the responsibility to engage Americans in intensive service at non-profits, schools, public agencies and community and faith based groups across the country through its programs: AmeriCorps and Senior Corps. In addition, through its Social Innovation Fund, they mobilize private resources, and find and grow community solutions.

AmeriCorps Programs

Launched in 1993 under the National and Community Service Trust Act, AmeriCorps is a network of service programs that engage Americans to meet the nation's needs in – education, disaster services, economic opportunity, healthy futures, environmental stewardship and service to veterans and military families. Less than 50% of members serve in a full time capacity. AmeriCorps members serve at more than 60,000 locations with thousands of not-for-profit organizations through three programs:

Through AmeriCorps State and National, the broadest of the programs, grants are provided to a network of local and national organizations (Like Habitat for Humanity, City Year and Teach for America) and committed to using national service to address critical community needs in education, health, disaster relief, economic development, the environment and programs for veterans and military families. For example, Members provide direct service by tutoring children, building homes and providing immediate response after disasters hit, among many other projects.

AmeriCorps VISTA provides full-time members to nonprofit, faith-based and other community organizations, and public agencies to build the capacity of these organizations to create and expand programs that bring low-income individuals and communities out of poverty.

AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC) is a full-time, team-based, residential program for men and women ages 18-24. Its mission is to strengthen communities and develop leaders through direct, team-based national and community service. Members are based at one of five campuses nationwide - in Baltimore, MD, Denver, CO, Vinton, IA, Vicksburg, MS and Sacramento, CA.

AmeriCorps members receive a modest living allowance and an education award (up to \$5,775.00) that can assist with further education or college debt. Some programs offer less than full-time and summer service positions.

Participation of people with disabilities in AmeriCorps programs

CNCS is collecting data on the population currently serving in our AmeriCorps programs. We know through anecdotal information that people with the full range of disability types have served in our AmeriCorps programs. We are also working with the Social Security Administration through a data sharing agreement to track the employment outcomes of those who have served in AmeriCorps.

The value of the AmeriCorps experience

The 2013 CNCS [Volunteering as a Pathway to Employment Report](#) provides the most compelling empirical research to date establishing an association between volunteering and employment in the United States.

Key findings on the connection between volunteering and employment include the following:

- Volunteers have a 27 percent higher likelihood of finding a job after being out of work than non-volunteers;
- Volunteers without a high school diploma have a 51 percent higher likelihood of finding employment than non-volunteers;
- Volunteers living in rural areas have a 55 percent higher likelihood of finding employment than non-volunteers.

In October 2015, CNCS released responses from an [AmeriCorps Outcomes](#) alumni survey designed to understand and document long-term outcomes for AmeriCorps alumni in four areas: development of career-oriented soft skills, career pathways, sense of community, and civic engagement. The study compared results for cohorts of AmeriCorps alumni who completed their service in 2012, 2009, and 2004 (two, five, and 10 years before the survey project began).

Findings include:

- AmeriCorps alumni report having high levels of career-oriented soft skills including cultural competency, self-efficacy, and career-specific skills for interacting with others and for self-management. In each skill area, alumni reported that their skills had increased from before AmeriCorps service or that AmeriCorps service had helped build these skills.
- **Career Pathways:** While there was some diversity in career pathways, most alumni were students prior to AmeriCorps (63 percent), and of those who were engaged in education six months prior to AmeriCorps, analysis shows that 44 percent were working in the government or nonprofit sector six months after AmeriCorps and 56 percent are working in the government or nonprofit sector now.
- Other alumni attended school after AmeriCorps, furthering their education goals. At the time of the survey, more than half of alumni reported working in the nonprofit (33 percent) or government sector (25 percent). Following service, approximately one quarter of participants (27 percent) obtained a job directly connected to the organization or agency in which they served. Fifteen percent are currently in a position related to their service. A majority of alumni (80 percent) indicated their service experience was worthwhile in furthering their careers. Most alumni responded that AmeriCorps service either aligned with their existing career path or directed them towards a service-related field, with 34 percent indicating that their career path turned in the direction of service-related work following AmeriCorps. After service, 43 percent of alumni stayed in their community of service.
- **Sense of community:** Overall, alumni reported having a strong sense of community, with an average of 82 percent of alumni agreeing that they felt a strong personal attachment to their community, were aware of community needs, felt an obligation to contribute to their community, planned or were actively involved in community issues, and voted in elections.

- **Civic engagement:** AmeriCorps alumni reported high levels of civic engagement and civic self-efficacy and indicated that their AmeriCorps experience influenced their civic engagement. Almost 80 percent of alumni indicated that they definitely or probably had civic self-efficacy, defined as the ability to deal with community problems by taking a range of actions that include creating a plan to address an issue, getting others involved, organizing and running a meeting, identifying individuals or groups who could help, or contacting an elected official.

Disability benefits and national service

Under the Heroes Earning Assistance and Relief Act (HEART Act) of 1998, AmeriCorps members with disabilities who receive SSI benefits due to their disability, can receive an AmeriCorps stipend without impact to their SSI during or following service. This income exclusion applies to all AmeriCorps programs (State and local, NCCC and VISTA). In addition, VISTA members with disabilities who receive SSDI are able to maintain their SSDI without impact to their disability benefit.

Collaboration ideas between your work & national service (contact: Stephanie Enyart senyart@cns.gov):

- Constructing pipeline programs for youth with disabilities to learn about and engage in our national service programs.
- Train parts of your agency or key stakeholders who work closely with youth with disabilities to advocate engaging in our service programs.
- Distribute our disability community [recruitment FAQ's](#).
- Engage in a data sharing or research agreement with us to document impact of national service on various aspects of the disability community.
- Identify and encourage applicants in the non-profit sector to operate their own AmeriCorps programs by participating in our competitive grant process (the next competition will be announced in late summer/early fall with specific outreach to disability community organizations and deadlines at the end of 2016).